

A Lingocultural Study of Religiosity in the Modern Anglo-American Proverbs

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A Lingocultural Study of Religiosity in the Modern Anglo-American Proverbs. The study examines a corpus of modern Anglo-American proverbs related to religion found in 'The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs' (2012), by Charles Clay Doyle, Wolfgang Mieder and Fred Shapiro (Eds.). The semantics and pragmatics of the proverbs are elicited through applying the cultureme as a unit of linguocultural analysis. The findings of the study reveal a set of specific attitudes to religion shaping present-day American culture.

Key Words: *Modern Anglo-American Proverbs; Cultureme; Linguistic Culturology*

INTRODUCTION

Today, contrary to all expectations, the old and traditional genre of proverbs, whose most salient feature is that as an important part of folklore the paremias are usually centuries, even millennia old, is far from disappearing. Indeed there is ample evidence suggesting that large numbers of entirely new texts continue to emerge, taking the place of obsolete ones, and that even whole new subgenres such as that of the counterproverbs or antiproverbs are becoming a legitimate part of the proverb system as we know it. These changes hold good particularly for the proverbs that were coined and became current in the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries in the most highly-advanced post-industrialised country in the world – the USA, before spreading to the other Anglophone nations and communities and various other parts of the world.

A number of tendencies can easily be observed that characterise the present state of affairs in the proverb genre in the Anglophone world. First, in today's globalised world, an ever increasing number of formerly 'national' proverbs tend to cross national boundaries to become 'adopted' by other cultures, and this takes place much more easily than ever before. Secondly, within a given national linguoculture, another process has become conspicuous on a massive scale: of texts transcending folk art to join other types of discourse, e.g., literary works, advertising, the media, political discourse, scholarly discourse, etc. The third current tendency is concerned with the changes affecting not only the form and content of the new coinages, which tend to deviate from the form and content of their 'archetypal' ancestors, but also with the traditional educational, ennobling, didactic and uplifting mission of the proverb genre as such. These facts can be explained and interpreted from diverse perspectives, one of which is that of linguistic culturology, whose proponents maintain that many of the changes in language invariably reflect not only the profound undercurrents and more obvious changes in culture, but also its more subtle and less obvious tendencies.

In this study, by explicating and discussing the kind of religiosity in a corpus of modern religion-related Anglo-American proverbs, we will attempt to gain an insight into some recent trends that shape modern American culture.

DISCUSSION

This study belongs to two branches of language and culture studies: structural paremiology, and linguistic culturology.

Structural paremiology views proverbs as signs of typical situations and relations between entities. [1] From a semiotic (structural) perspective, a proverb text is an indivisible unity of the proverb sentence proper (the plane of expression, or form, i.e., that of the explicit or denotational meaning) and its specific proverb meaning, or sense (the content plane, i.e., that of the implicit, figurative, or connotational meaning) (for the terms denotation and connotation, see [2] and [3]). Over the last four or five decades, this

dichotomy, which is central to structural paremiology, has been subject to a variety of interpretations by semioticians and structuralists, among whom the founder of structural paremiology G. L. Permyakov [1], Alexander K. Zholkovskiy [4], who as co-founder of the *text*→*meaning* approach, studied proverbs from this particular perspective, E. N. Savina (1984) [5], Alan Dundes (1987) [6], Peter Grzybeck (1994) [7], Magdalena Elchinova (1988) [8], Roumyana Petrova (2002) [9] (2006) [10] (2010) [11] (2010a) [12] (2012) [13] and many others. Viewed from a structuralist perspective, proverbs, and in particular the figurative proverbs, exhibit a surface structure and a deep structure in a sense that is different from that understood in terms of Noam Chomsky's Transformational-Generative Grammar: in proverb studies, the surface structure is to be understood as the linguistic representation of the proverb, i.e., the string of words making up the proverb sentence, while the deep structure is the proverb meaning proper, which in the non-figurative texts overlaps with the meaning of the proposition the proverb sentence stands for (cf. Michael Dummett's note on the meaning of a sentence [14]), while in the figurative texts it is as a rule different from it. For example, the meaning of the non-figurative Anglo-American proverb *Three moves are as bad as a fire* (from Benjamin Franklin's well-known eighteenth-century book *Poor Richard's Almanac*), played out on both the expression and content plane (i.e., the surface and the deep structure of the proverb), is the same, namely: 'if someone moves to a new place and does that three times, this process will be the same as losing all of one's personal possessions in a fire'. But, as large part of the proverbs in many languages tend to be figurative, it is in these texts that the disparity between the content plane and the plane of form / expression (or between their deep and surface structures) is best manifested. For example, the meaning of the figurative proverb *The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence*, whose proposition can be rendered in any natural language by translating the English sentence literally, has indeed nothing to do with grass, gardening, or fences; rather, it is a metaphor implying that people often believe that what others possess is much better than their own, or (at least in Anglo English and in the context of Anglo culture, if we were to use Anna Wierzbicka's descriptive terms [15])) this proverb is a comment on envy.

The view of proverbs as signs of specific ethnic or national cultures has been central to linguistic culturology – a contemporary discipline whose main objective is to explore the common ground shared by linguistics and the study of culture. The name linguistic culturology (or: linguoculturology), a rather unfortunate literal translation of the original Russian name 'лингвокультурология' (and its Bulgarian counterpart 'лингвокултурология'), has been chosen as a working alternative to the collocations 'linguistic anthropology' 'cultural studies', and 'cultural linguistics' on the grounds of the important differences between the meanings of these terms (for explanations of the names 'linguistic anthropology' and 'cultural studies' vs 'linguistic culturology / linguoculturology' see Petrova 1996 [16] and 2004 [17]). Linguistic culturology originated in Russia less than two decades ago and is now a full-grown scholarly discipline attracting many scholars, whose backgrounds range from linguistics to philology to the social sciences. Major names in Russian are: V. V. Vorobyov [18], Y. S. Stepanov [19], V. A. Maslova [20], V. I. Karassik [21], [22], V. I. Karasik and G. G. Slyshkin [23], S. G. Vorkachov [24], [25], and N. F. Alefirenko [26], to name but a few. Examples for Bulgaria are: M. Simeonova [27], M. Almalech [28], [29], R. Petrova [30], [31], [32], [33], [34], [35], [36], [37] and [38]), I. Panchev [39], [40], E. Nedkova [41], and P. Trendafilova [42], among several others. Linguistic culturology breaks the myth of the 'freedom of [linguistic] expression' of *homo loquens*, arguing that in the process of communication people find themselves to a very large extent at the mercy of the specific conceptualisation that is part and parcel of their native language as a structure and a body of precedent texts. This problem has been explored from diverse perspectives including the semiotic approach, and was amply demonstrated in Umberto Eco's series of studies published in the 1980s and 1990s. [43] In

building its research methodology, linguistic culturology draws from a large number of fields such as semiotics and structuralism, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, ethnolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, pragmatics, cognitive linguistics, literary and cultural studies, and other branches of linguistics and philology, as well as from the study of history and culture.

Linguistic culturology views the proverb system of a language as a truthful representation of the specific way of life and set of values of the people speaking this language, i.e., of their linguoculture. There is no doubt that there certainly is, and has always been, a lot of give and take among the linguocultures on this planet, including their proverb systems, but while contending that there is some common ground shared by all, linguistic culturology argues that the latter in no way diminishes the uniqueness of each language and the culture it stands for. As the proverb scholar Richard Honeck has put it: "... proverbs are generated from universal human knowledge about ideals, standards, and norms, which act as reference points in evaluating events. These reference points are *intuitive forms of perfection*. *Cultures develop idiosyncratic linguistic means of expressing the perfection* (emphasis added – R. P.). Thus, proverbs from other cultures may be hard or impossible for a nonnative to interpret, but once the cultural code is broken, the proverbs can be seen to have a species-wide significance." [44] The idea implied in this fragment is that from a cognitive linguistic perspective, there seems to exist a common mental core underlying the proverb lore of all people, while from a linguocultural perspective there are certain specific differences between the individual proverb systems, making each one unique. In this latter sense, we can speak of English, German, Bulgarian, Greek, Finnish etc. linguocultures represented in and through their proverbs, whose 'intuitive forms of perfection' can be described more or less fully by studying their corresponding proverb systems, in which each proverb text is a generalisation and a sign, of a situation that is typical of this particular culture and where the images employed point to specific aspects of the environment and everyday life of a specific ethnic group. To illustrate with a simple example: we can't expect to find many proverbs about baseball, business or computing among the Touareg inhabitants of Sahara, or many texts about camels and deserts in the English proverb lore.

Research Methodology

In linguistic culturology, a proverb can be defined as a precedent autosemantic text, which on a second level of signification behaves simultaneously as a sign of a particular cultural entity – the axiologically marked notion 'beyond' the proverb texts, known as the **cultureme**. A proverb is, in other words, the linguistic embodiment (i.e., a sign) of this entity. From a pragmatic perspective, a proverb is also a linguistic embodiment of a specific **message**, which gives additional evidence of the character of the same culture. In order for the cultureme and the message to be made explicit, the proverb text must be fully understood and, if necessary, translated. Paremiographers and paremiologists, who often have to compare proverbs in diverse languages, sometimes provide literal translations of the foreign proverbs in their native languages in the hope that this will help the reader to come closer to their definitions. Another good strategy is the provision of explanations (this is very well illustrated in the dictionary *English Proverbs Explained* by R. Ridout and C. Witting. [45] When this is not possible, some authors would provide relevant excerpts from literature with the proverb used in specific contexts. But most often, the proverb texts are left unexplained. This may cause considerable difficulties for the readers who are not familiar with the meaning behind the proverb sentence, or who might come up with their own incorrect interpretations based on their own literal translations.

To avoid such errors, for each proverb in the present study a definition / explanation is provided. The definitions / explanations are inferred from the information in the corresponding entries in the DMP and verified through comparing them with information

from the Internet related to specific usages of the proverbs in context, variants, counterparts in other languages, interpretations offered by native speakers, and so forth.

An example illustrating how crucial contextual information can be for the explication of the definition is the proverb *Karma is a bitch*. This proverb is synonymous with *Payback is a bitch* and *Life is a bitch*, it belongs to the jargon of rapper / rock musicians and can be used with the same meaning as the sentence *It serves you (him, her, them, me) right*, and is used in discourse as a critical comment addressed to someone who has formerly been mean to someone else in trouble, but now finds himself in the same critical situation.

In some instances, to elucidate the definition, notes about the origin of the proverb can also be of help. Such an example is *God doesn't play dice*, which has been documented as one of Albert Einstein's well-known sayings implying that nothing in the God-created universe is accidental and that, in general, nature is largely predictable.

Often, information about the usage is indispensable for understanding the proverb definition, as with *God made dirt, dirt don't hurt*, which is said when someone, esp. children, drop food on the floor or ground and brush it off and eat it.

Linguistic culturology places great stress on the role of semantic / semiotic density, understood as the frequency of usage and the degree of semantic or cultural elaboration of either a particular linguistic item, image, or concept (idea), or a particular theme within a corpus, text, or a body of texts, in one or – in contrastive studies – two or more languages. This method is amply demonstrated in the works of Wierzbicka [46], Karasik [47], and Almalech [48] – the latter for Old Testament Hebrew studies. Among the precedent texts, i.e., the group of well-known texts in a language which best characterise its culture, proverbs form a very important body. Taking into account the semantic density of an item, unit, topic, image, or a certain notion, means interpreting quantity in terms of quality, which is to say that the semantic density serves as an index of cultural significance. As regards proverbs, linguistic culturology focuses on the semantic density not only of the specific words, structures or images in them, but also of that of their culturemes and messages.

It has been found through observing large proverb corpora that as a concrete generalisation of human experience, each proverb focuses on just one, and very rarely more than one particular entity, most often a human quality or trait, which is as a rule presented – explicitly or implicitly – either as positive (acceptable, desirable, recommended), or as negative (unacceptable, undesirable). In other words, each proverb either affirms (by extolling, promoting, praising, etc.) something, or, vice versa, condemns it (by criticising it, ridiculing it, warning against it, etc.). For example, Benjamin Franklin's proverb about the removals quoted above is a warning (and certainly not a recommendation) addressed to his contemporaries that moving house can be an extremely frustrating and costly affair, i.e., removals are presented in a negative light. Similarly, the proverb about the beautiful green lawns of our neighbours, by commenting on envy, ridicules this human weakness thus presenting it also negatively. We can verbalise and summarise the basic entities commented in these two proverbs by using a single noun or noun phrase with a plus or a minus sign attached to it, and thus obtain the culturemes 'moving to a new place (+)', and 'envy (-)'.

From a semiotic perspective, a proverb cultureme, then, is a unit of the semiosphere, one of its many specific concretisations. [49] It can fairly easily be brought to the surface by answering the question: 'What does this proverb evaluate as positive or negative?' But there is more to proverbs as cultural texts. From a pragmatic perspective, by drawing our attention to certain aspects of reality and evaluating them positively or negatively, the traditional, archetypal proverb advises us on how to behave / how not to behave, what to accept / what not to accept, or what kind of person to be / not to be, in the context of the specific culture, should we find ourselves in a situation similar to the one described in the proverb. This peculiar pragmatic aspect of proverbs – their messages, has found a fitting

expression in the description of proverbs as 'gems of generationally tested wisdom', coined by the proverb scholar of world renown Professor Wolfgang Mieder. The message of each proverb as a semantic extension of its cultureme summarises the proverb's particular lesson, moral, or advice, sometimes overtly, but more often implicitly. Examples of explicit messages, whose verbalised forms completely overlap with the meaning of the proverb sentences, are: *Care not for that which you can never possess*, and *Go all the way, or don't go at all*. But if we are dealing with figurative texts, whose messages are never obvious – and this is by far the case with most of the proverbs – we have to ask the question: 'What does this proverb advise us to do / to be, or not to do / not to be?', in order to explicate the message. Thus, the message of *You can't have an omelette unless you break the egg* is: 'Be prepared to sacrifice something in order to get something else of value'. The wording of the message usually takes the form of a sentence in the imperative. In the case of the first two examples above – *Three moves are as bad as a fire* and *The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence* – the corresponding messages will thus be: 'Avoid moving house' and 'Do not envy others'.

We can now see that providing the definition (explanation) of a proverb is not sufficient for fully understanding it as a **cultural text**. Linguistic cultrology places an even greater emphasis on the proverb message and the proverb cultureme as its central cultural characteristics, which can however be made explicit only after the definition has become clear. That is how we arrive at **the structure of the proverb meaning proper in terms of linguistic cultrology: an indivisible unity of the proverb definition, cultureme, and message**. The analysis section below lists all three components of the cultural semantics of proverbs.

The Object of This Study

The present study deals with a thematic group of modern Anglo-American proverbs, excerpted from *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* (from now on DMP), compiled by Charles Clay Doyle, Wolfgang Mieder, and Fred Shapiro and published by Yale University Press in 2012. [50] There already exist a few works about this dictionary (cf. Mieder (2012) [51] and Petrova (2013) [52], [53]; (2014) [54]), none of which however deals specifically with the religious aspect of the proverb texts included in the DMP. The present study aims to fill this gap with some initial findings, which will contribute to a better understanding of some of the characteristics of modern American culture.

The total number of texts in the DMP is only 1422, as these are only proverbs proper, i.e., one-sentence texts, the proverbial phrases being excluded. They were recorded for the first time in books, periodical and collections published in the USA after 1900. In the *Introduction*, on p. xi, the editors dwell on the origin and currency of these texts, explaining that most of them are from North America and the British Isles (the United Kingdom and Ireland) and that there are also proverbs from other Anglophone countries, e.g., Australia, New Zealand, the Anglophone parts of Asia, South America, Central America, and the Caribbean. However, a closer look at the entries reveals an almost 100 percent American (U.S.) origin and / or currency. Until about three decades ago, England and the USA shared practically the same proverbs, the specifically American texts amounting to only about 5%, which justifies the authors' preference for the term 'Anglo-American' to 'American'. [55] As for the adjective 'modern', having in mind that proverbs as a folk genre are usually at least several centuries old, most of the texts included in the DMP appear to be extraordinarily recent. They therefore represent not so much the old, traditional and lasting traits of the American character, but the mentality and worldview of the people of twentieth-century America and, to some extent, that of the people inhabiting those parts of the Anglophone world, which are most strongly influenced by modern American culture.

These texts therefore are sound evidence of the various popular trends that have gradually come to shape modern American mentality.

The corpus under study comprises the sixty-six texts excerpted from the DMP that have to do with religion either explicitly, i.e., through their wording, or implicitly, through their semantics (i.e., definitions, explanations, messages and culturemes). The relatedness of a given proverb text to religion takes three forms: on both the form and content plane (Type A1), on the content (deep-structure) plane only (Type A2), and on the form (surface-structure) plane only (Type B). The first two types, A1 and A2, are thus 'religious' proverbs proper, while the third group, B, comprises the 'quasi-religious' texts.

An example of group A1 is: *Only God can make a tree*. It is religious in both vocabulary (the presence of the lexeme 'God' in its wording) and meaning (cf. its definition – 'God alone has unique powers of creation'). The second type, A2, can be illustrated with the proverb *A criminal (murderer) (always) returns to the scene of his crime*. This text does not contain any lexical items pertaining to religion, but being a modern rendition of the well-known Biblical verse *As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly* (Prov. 26 : 11, KJV), it is thus also religious in meaning (its definition overlaps with the meaning of the proverb sentence). Finally, the proverb *In heaven an angel is nobody in particular*, in which the words 'heaven' and 'angel', although semantically related to religion are only used as images to convey the secular definition of the proverb: 'one cannot stand out among many others who are equally good', represents the third – quasi-religious – type, B.

By discussing and comparing the proverbs in the three groups described above we hope to find answers to the following questions: What is the attitude of modern Americans, whose culture and history go back to Puritanism in its specific historically evolved form, to religion today? Is religion as important as it used to be two or three centuries ago? What is the present-day popular notion of religion exemplified in these proverbs?

It seems that religion still matters a great deal for Americans, at least according to some representatives of the academia, judging from a statement made by the well-known American philosopher and economist James R. Otteson in a section of his book *Practical Ethics*, entitled *Religion Is Too Important To Be Left To Politics And Politicians*: 'one's religious beliefs, whatever they are, are a foundational element of one's worldview – perhaps even the single most important element, the one that fixes and orders all the others'. In the subsequent pages of his book, however, Otteson embarks on a steady, argumentative defence of the constitutional rights of the American parents of deciding on the kind of religion for their children 'without the coercive interference of the state', the implication being that although for the average American religion is still felt to be central to his own life and the life of his family, the state is increasingly trying to deprive him of one of his basic constitutional rights: the freedom of personal choice on this issue. [56]

But while going through the DMP, the experienced proverb scholar, who would inevitably compare what he sees on the pages of this dictionary with the proverbs usually seen on the pages of some other, older, well-familiar and more traditional English proverb collections and sources, from which the American proverb lore originates, would be immediately struck by the utter lack of religiosity in many of the modern proverbs that employ religious imagery. Another peculiar fact is that in the DMP not only does the share of American proverbs proper appear to have increased drastically, but also that the quality of many of the religious texts seems to have somehow 'deteriorated', were we allowed to use an evaluative term. This can very easily be seen if we compare some older English

and / or American religion-related proverbs taken from earlier dictionaries, such as that by G. L. Apperson [57], Wolfgang Mieder [58], or Mieder et al. [59], with the texts in the DMP.

This can be easily seen in list of proverbs below. They are taken from the well-known historical collection of English proverbs and proverbial phrases compiled by George Latimer Apperson in the first decades of the 20th century and first published in 1929 (and then again in 1993, by Wordsworth Editions). According to the date of their first recording, the currency of these proverbs in the English language and culture covers a period of four centuries, from 1534 to 1929. They have been chosen on the grounds of both their religious meanings and their religious lexical content, i.e., the inclusion of words that belong to the semantic cluster of religion: 'God', 'religion', 'heaven', 'hell', 'angel', 'devil', 'church', 'conscience', 'redemption', 'cross', 'sin', 'virtue', 'charity', 'love', 'repentance', etc.

1. (p. 250) **God** comes to see without a bell.
2. (p. 250) **God** comes with leaden feet, but strikes with iron hands.
3. (p. 251) **God** complains not, but does what is fitting.
4. (p. 251) **God** defend me from the still water, and I'll keep myself from the rough.
5. (p. 251) **God** deliver me from the man of one book.
6. (p. 251) He that serves **God** for money, will serve the devil for better wages.
7. (p. 251) **God** hath few friends, the devil hath many.
8. (p. 251) Beware of him whom **God** hath marked.
9. (p. 251) **God** hath often a great share in a little house.
10. (p. 251) He who serves **God**, hath a good master.
11. (p. 251) **God** heals, and the physician hath the thanks.
12. (p. 251) **God** helps them that help themselves.
13. (p. 251) Where **God** helps, nought harms.
14. (p. 252) Serve **God** in thy calling, it is better than praying.
15. (p. 252) **God** is a good man.
16. (p. 252) **God** is at the end when we think he is farthest off it.
17. (p. 252) **God** is better pleased with adverbs than with nouns.
18. (p. 252) **God** is in the ambry. (Ambry: a niche near the altar of a church for keeping sacred vessels and vestments.)
19. (p. 252) **God** is no botcher (i.e., God never messes things up.).
20. (p. 252) **God** is where he was.
21. (p. 252) That which **God** kills is better than that killed by man.
22. (p. 252) **God** knows well which are the best pilgrims.
23. (p. 252) Whom **God** loves, his house is savoury.
24. (p. 252) What **God** made, he never mars.
25. (p. 252) **God** makes and apparel shapes, but it is money that finishes the man.
26. (p. 252) **God** never pays his debts with money.
27. (p. 252) **God** never sends mouths but he sends meat.
28. (p. 252) **God** only makes heirs.
29. (p. 252) **God**, our parents and our master can never be requited.
30. (p. 252) **God** send me a friend that may tell me of my faults; if not, an enemy, and he will.
31. (p. 253) **God** send you joy, for sorrow will come fast enough.
32. (p. 253) **God** sends cold after clothes.
33. (p. 253) **God** sends corn and the devil mars the sack.
34. (p. 253) **God** sends fortune to fools.
35. (p. 253) **God** sends good luck and God sends bad.
36. (p. 253) **God** sends meat and the devil sends cooks.
37. (p. 253) **God** stays long but strikes at last.
38. (p. 253) **God** tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.
39. (p. 253) Better **God** than gold.

40. (p. 253) He is a **God** that helps a man.
41. (p. 253) The grace of **God** is worth a fair.
42. (p. 253) Get thy spindle and thy distaff ready, and **God** will send thee flax.
43. (p. 254) What **God** will, no frost can kill.
44. (p. 254) When **God** will, all winds bring rain.
45. (p. 254) **God's** help is better than early rising.
46. (p. 254) Who hopeth in **God's** help, his help cannot start.
47. (p. 254) **God's** mill grinds slow but sure.
48. (p. 254) That never ends ill which begins in **God's** name.
49. (p. 91) The **charitable** gives out at the door, and **God** puts in at the window.
50. (p. 91) He is not **charitable** that will not be so privately.
51. (p. 91) **Charity** begins at home.
52. (p. 131) The danger past **God** is forgotten.
53. (p. 146) The devil has a chapel wherever **God** has a church.
54. (p. 146) The **devil** is **God's** ape.
55. (p. 246) Giving to **God** is no loss.
56. (p. 247) What thou sparest from giving for **God's** sake, the devil will carry another way.
57. (p. 262) To a good spender, **God** is the treasurer.
58. (p. 327) In time comes he whom **God** sends.
59. (p. 396) Man doth what he can and **God** what He will.
60. (p. 396) Man is a **God** to man.
61. (p. 397) Man proposes but **God** disposes.
62. (p. 397) The man of **God** is better by having his bows and arrows about him.
63. (p. 409) Use the means, and **God** will give the blessing.
64. (p. 470) One **God**, no more, but friends good store.
65. (p. 478) I owe **God** a death.
66. (p. 482) Pains is the price that **God** putteth upon all things.
67. (p. 502) When it pleaseth not **God**, the saint can do little.
68. (p. 506) They are poor whom **God** hates.
69. (p. 592) He that sows [his corn in the field] trusts in **God**.
70. (p. 595) Spend and **God** will send.
71. (p. 527) **Religion** is the best armour in the world, but the worst cloak.
72. (p. 196) The eye and **religion** can bear no jesting.
73. (p. 544) They are not **saints** that use holy water.
74. (p. 297) **Hell** is paved with good intentions.
75. (p. 297) **Hell** is wherever **heaven** is not.
76. (p. 297) There is no **redemption** from **hell**.
77. (p. 297) They that be in **hell**, think there's no better **heaven**.
78. (p. 287) Harrow **hell**, and rake up the **devil**.
79. (p. 142) An artful fellow is a **devil** in a doublet (doublet: jacket).
80. (p. 143) Away goes the **devil** when he finds the door shut against him.
81. (p. 143) Better keep the **devil** at the door than turn him out of the house.
82. (p. 143) Give the **devil** his due.
83. (p. 143) He that sups with the **devil** needs a long spoon.
84. (p. 144) He that takes the **devil** into his boat, must carry him over the Sound.
85. (p. 143) He that hath shipped the **devil** must make the best of him.
86. (p. 143) He that the **devil** drives, feels no lead at his heels.
87. (p. 143) If the **devil** catch a man idle, he'll set him at work.
88. (p. 143) If you buy the **devil** you must sell the devil.
89. (p. 143) It is a sin to belie (belie: contradict) the **devil**.
90. (p. 143) It is an ill army where the **devil** carries the colours (the banner).
91. (p. 143) It is an ill procession where the **devil** bears the cross.

92. (p. 143) Never go to the **devil** with a dishclout (i.e., dishcloth) in your hand.
93. (p. 143) One **devil** is like another.
94. (p. 143) Seldom lies the **devil** dead by the gate.
95. (p. 143) The **devil** can quote Scripture.
96. (p. 143) The **devil** dances in a woman's placket (placket: petticoat).
100. (p. 143) The **devil** dares not peep under a maid's coat.
101. (p. 143) The **devil** gets up to the belfry by the vicar's skirts.
102. (p. 146) The **devil** has no power over a drunkard.
103. (p. 146) The **devil** has cast a bone to set strife.
104. (p. 146) The **devil** is a busy bishop in his own diocese.
105. (p. 146) The **devil** is a knave.
106. (p. 146) The **devil** is an ass.
107. (p. 146) The **devil** is good to his own.
108. (p. 146) The **devil** is good when he is pleased.
109. (p. 146) The **devil** is in the dice.
110. (p. 146) The **devil** is not always at one door.
111. (p. 147) The **devil** is not so black as he is painted.
112. (p. 147) The **devil** is seldom outshot in his own bow.
115. (p. 147) The **devil** laughs when one thief robs another.
116. (p. 147) The **devil** lurks behind the cross.
117. (p. 147) The **devil** made askers (askers: inquisitors).
118. (p. 147) The **devil** lies brooding in the miser's chest.
119. (p. 147) The **devil** makes his Christmas pies of clerks' fingers and lawyers' tongues.
120. (p. 147) The **devil** dances in an empty pocket.
121. (p. 147) The **devil** rebukes sin.
122. (p. 148) The **devil** sometimes speaks the truth.
123. (p. 148) The **devil** tempts some, but an idle man tempts the devil.
124. (p. 148) The **devil** will take his own.
121. (p. 148) The **devil** wipes his tail with the poor man's pride.
122. (p. 148) **The devil's meal** (flour) is half bran.
123. (p. 148) **The devil's mouth** is a miser's purse.
124. (p. 148) 'Twas surely the **devil** that taught women to dance and asses to bray.
125. (p. 148) What's got over **the devil's back** is spent under his belly.
126. (p. 148) When it rains and the sun shines at the same time the **devil** is beating his wife.
127. (p. 148) When the **devil** preys, he has a booty in his eye (booty: gain).
128. (p. 148) When the **devil** preaches, the world's near an end.
129. (p. 22) **Bad priests** bring the **devil** into the church.
130. (p. 29) Beads about the neck and the **devil** in the heart.
131. (p. 81) Cards are the **devil's books**.
132. (p. 219) When flatterers meet, the **devil** goes to dinner.
133. (p. 247) To give a thing and to take a thing is to wear **the devil's ring**.
134. (p. 321) An idle person is the **devil's** cushion.
135. (p. 321) Idle brains are the **devil's** workshop.
136. (p. 450) No rogue like a **godly rogue**.
137. (p. 572) It is a **sin** to steal a pin.
138. (p. 572) Our **sins** and our debts are always greater than we take them to be.
139. (p. 572) **Sins** are not known till they be acted.
140. (p. 572) **Sin** that is hidden is half forgiven.
141. (p. 452) No **sin** to cheat the **devil**.
142. (p. 532) He must rise betimes who will cozen (cozen: play a trick on) the **devil**.
143. (p. 555) A saint abroad (abroad: in public, before others) and a **devil** at home.

144. (p. 579) Sloth is the **devil's cushion** (pillow).
145. (p. 649) Tell the truth and shame the **devil**.
146. (p. 650) Truth shameth the **devil**.
147. (p. 703) A wicked woman and an evil is three halfpence worse (some nine parts worse) than the **devil**.
148. (p. 703) A woman can do more than the **devil**.
149. (p. 703) A woman is an angel at ten, a saint at fifteen, a **devil** at forty and a witch at fourscore.
150. (p. 704) Tell a woman she's a beauty, and the **devil** will tell her so ten times.
151. (p. 99) **Church** work goes on slowly.
152. (p. 100) Though you see a **churchman** ill, yet continue in the **church** still.
153. (p. 528) **Repentance** always comes behind (behind: late).
154. (p. 528) **Repentance** comes too late.
155. (p. 528) He that **repents** is a fool.
156. (p. 387) **Love your neighbour** yet pull not down your hedge.
157. (p. 111) **Confessing** a fault makes half amends.
158. (p. 111) A generous **confession** disarms slander.
159. (p. 111) **Confession** is the first step to repentance.
160. (p. 111) A **clear conscience** can bear any trouble.
161. (p. 111) A **good conscience** is a continual feast.
162. (p. 111) A **good conscience** is the best divinity.
163. (p. 111) A **guilty conscience** is a self-accuser.
164. (p. 111) A **quiet conscience** causes a quiet sleep.
165. (p. 111) An **evil conscience** breaks many a man's neck.
166. (p. 111) **Conscience** is a cut-throat.
167. (p. 111) **Conscience** serves a thousand witnesses.
168. (p. 306) Of all crafts, to be an **honest man** is the master craft.
169. (p. 306) Too much **honesty** did never man harm.
170. (p. 306) **Honesty** is a fine jewel, but much out of fashion.
171. (p. 306) **Honesty** is the best policy.
172. (p. 663) **Vice** is often clothed in virtue's habit.
173. (p. 306) **Vice** makes **virtue** shine.
174. (p. 306) **Vice** ruleth where gold reigneth.
175. (p. 306) **Vices** are learned without a master.
176. (p. 306) Where **vice** is vengeance follows.
177. (p. 306) **Virtue** and a trade are the best portion for children.
178. (p. 306) **Virtue** has all things in itself.
179. (p. 306) **Virtue** is its own reward.
180. (p. 306) **Virtue** is the only true nobility.
181. (p. 306) **Virtue** never grows old.
182. (p. 306) **Virtue** praised increaseth.
183. (p. 664) **Virtues** all agree, but **vices** fight one another.
184. (p. 306) **Virtue** which parleys (parleys: negotiates) is near a surrender.
185. (p. 510) He that would learn to **pray**, let him go to sea (He who cannot pray, must go to church at sea).
186. (p. 510) **Prayers** bring down the first blessing, and praises the second.
187. (p. 510) He **preaches** well that lives well.
188. (p. 258) A good example is the best **sermon**.
189. (p. 257) A **good deed** is never lost.
190. (p. 673) When thou dost hear a toll or knell, Then think upon thy **passing bell**.
191. (p. 483) He that will enter into **Paradise** must have a good key.
192. (p. 245) Ghosts never appear on **Christmas Eve**.
193. (p. 230) To **forget a wrong** is the best revenge.

194. (p. 230) **Forgive and forget.**
195. (p. 230) **Forgive** any sooner than thyself.
196. (p. 230) If we are bound to **forgive an enemy**, we are not bound to trust him.
197. (p. 230) Revenge a wrong by **forgiving** it.
198. (p. 230) **Forgiveness** and a smile is the best revenge.
199. (p. 230) The noblest vengeance is **to forgive**.
200. (p. 532) **Right** wrongs no man.

The total number of all the religion-related proverbs in this well-known collection is 200, the total number of entries being 9,291. Even a cursory look at the examples above shows that with regard to their general content, style and message, they can almost all be described as didactic, moralising, edifying and instructive in a simple, straightforward and unambiguous way. This peculiar quality of the older texts makes them akin to the verses in the Old Testament *Book of Proverbs* or to any other texts that belong to the wisdom literature of the old cultural traditions of the world. Such texts represent the archetypal, prototypical kind of proverbs and parables, whose main characteristic is that they are specifically created to teach people wisdom and good morals and making them better human beings, within the context of the particular cultures, of course. In such texts, the stark contrast between good and evil, right and wrong, vice and virtue, proper and improper, beautiful and ugly, is as a rule at the centre of the proverb message, and this contrast is stated in very clear terms (for a detailed discussion of this dichotomy in the *Book of Proverbs* see Petrova [60]).

As will be seen, the comparison between the general message of these older texts and that of the corpus excerpted from the DMP presented on the next pages will elicit some valuable clues to the specific kind of ethics that is promoted by the modern proverbs.

The Analysis section below presents the proverb meaning proper of the sixty-six modern religion-related proverbs in the DMP. They are classified according to the meaning that is played out on the content plane into the two groups mentioned earlier: religious (numbers 1 through 29) and quasi-religious (numbers 30 through 66).

Analysis

As explained earlier, in terms of linguistic culturology, the deep structure meaning of a proverb, i.e., its definition, together with its cultureme and message, are assumed to constitute its cultural semantics proper. The three examples explained below illustrate the three different types, A1, A2 (religious texts proper), and B (quasi-religious texts):

A1: *Only God can make a tree.* **Definition / Explanation:** God alone has unique powers of creation. **Message:** 'We should be aware of God's unique power to create living things.' **Cultureme:** 'God's unique power to create living things (+)'. – The word 'God' in the sentence belongs to the semantic field of religion and so does the cultureme: 'God's unique power to create living things (+)'. This text is therefore religious in both form and content.

A2: *A criminal (murderer) (always) returns to the scene of his crime.* The proverb is a modern rendition of the Biblical verse *As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly* (Prov. 26 : 11, KJV). **Definition / Explanation:** A criminal (murderer) (always) returns to the scene of his crime. **Message:** This legal proverb advises police detectives to go to the site of the crime and wait for the murderer, who will most probably come back, this behaviour prompted by his guilty conscience. **Cultureme:** 'the guilty conscience of a criminal (-)'. – This text is religious in both content (and origin), but not in form (does not contain lexical items pertaining to religion).

B: *In heaven an angel is nobody in particular.* **Definition / Explanation:** One cannot stand out among many others who are equally good. **Message:** Do not try to stand out among others who are equally good. **Cultureme:** 'standing out among others who are equally good (-)'. – On the expression (surface) plane, this proverb employs two religious images, 'heaven' and 'angels', but neither its definition, nor its message or cultureme are religious, so it is quasi-religious.

In the listing below, for the sake of clarity, the words and phrases pertaining to religion will be given in bold type and the definitions (explanations) will be underlined.

1. Religious Proverbs (29)

1. (A1). (p. 7) *Your **arms** are too short (not long enough) to box (fight, spar) with God.* **Definition / Explanation:** A person may revolt against the inevitable but he is not in the position to thwart God's will or his own fate. **Message:** 'You should not expect to be able to change God's will, the course of fate or the inevitable no matter how hard you may try.' **Cultureme:** 'the human's inability to thwart God's will / fate / the inevitable (-)'.

2. (A1) (p. 9) *There are no **atheists** in foxholes.* **Definition / Explanation:** In times of extreme stress or fear, such as in war, all people will believe in, or hope for, a higher power. [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/There are no atheists in foxholes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/There_are_no_atheists_in_foxholes) (26.08.2014)]. **Message:** 'In times of extreme stress or fear, such as in war, give up your atheism, start praying to God and ask for His protection.' **Cultureme:** 'the inefficiency of atheism in times of extreme danger (-)'.

3. (A2) (p. 21) *You can't keep **birds** from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair.* **Definition / Explanation:** We can't keep temptation from coming, but we don't have to yield to temptation. [<http://deepttruths.com> (26.08.2014)]. **Message:** 'Do not allow fleeting lustful thoughts and other temptations to take hold of your soul.' [<http://mikeratiff.wordpress.com/2007/03/08/are-birds-nesting-in-your-hair/> (15.09.2012)]. **Cultureme:** 'resisting temptation (+)'.

4. (A1) (p. 42) ***Conscience** gets a lot of credit that belongs to cold feet.* **Definition / Explanation:** Something commended as an act of conscience may be due to cowardice or lack of nerve. [FFD] **Message:** 'Know that what looks like an act of conscience or good and proper behaviour could have been prompted by fear (e.g., the fear of being thought of as a coward, ridiculed, exposed, caught, punished, etc.) rather than by sincere and noble motives.' **Cultureme:** 'the cowardice that often belies some seemingly good acts (-)'.

5. (A1) (p. 46) ***Courage** is fear that has said its prayers.* **Definition / Explanation:** (Cf. "Courage is fear that has said its prayers and decided to go forward anyway" – a quote by Joyce Meyer, a popular Bible teacher.) You can't have courage without being scared of something and choosing to face it even though you're afraid (implying that saying your prayers has given you strength from a holy source.) [<https://answers.yahoo.com> (26.08.2014)] (slightly edited). **Message:** 'In the face of danger pluck up your courage, say your prayers, and forget about your fears.' **Cultureme:** 'courage, strengthened by prayer (+)'.

6. (A2) (p. 47) *A **criminal** (murderer) (always) returns to the scene of his crime.* (p. 176) A **murderer** returns to the scene of his crime. Cf. As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly. (Proverb 26: 11, KJB). **Definition / Explanation:** The same as the proverb. **Message:** This legal proverb advises police detectives to go to the site of the

crime and wait for the murderer who will most probably come back, this kind of behaviour being prompted by his guilty conscience. **Cultureme:** 'the guilty conscience of a criminal (-)'.

7. (A1) (p. 48) *There is never a **cross** you can't bear*; (p. 104) *God sends no cross that you cannot bear*. Cf. the old proverb "God fits the burden to the shoulders." Cf. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13, KJB). **Definition / Explanation:** Believe that you will be equipped by a higher power with the right amount of inner strength required for enduring life's trials and tribulations without breaking. **Message:** The same as the definition. **Cultureme:** 'God's provision for man's strength for enduring hardship (+)'.

8. (A1) (p. 54) *If you dance with the **devil**, you will get burned*. **Definition / Explanation:** If you associate with evildoers, you will get into trouble. **Message:** 'Keep away from evildoers.' **Culturemes:** 'associating with evildoers (-)'; 'retribution (+)'.

9. (A1) (p. 54) *If you keep knocking on the **devil's** door, (sooner or later) somebody's going to answer*. **Definition / Explanation:** If you keep trying to do something horrible or bad that will hurt someone else, you are looking for the worst kind of trouble that you can not in any way handle. [<https://answers.yahoo.com> (26.08.2014)] (slightly edited). **Message:** The same as the definition. **Cultureme:** 'the consistent attempts at doing something bad (-)'.

10. (A1) (p. 54) *If you lie down with the **devil**, you will wake up in hell (you will get burned, you'd better be ready to f...ck, etc.)*. **Definition / Explanation:** If you become involved with bad company, there will be negative consequences. [<http://www.usingenglish.com> (26.08.2014)]. **Message:** The same as the definition. **Cultureme:** 'getting involved with evildoers (-)'; 'retribution (+)'.

11. (A1) (p. 73) *When all else **fails**, pray (try prayer)*; (p. 206) *When all else fails, try **prayer***. **Definition / Explanation:** Surrender yourself and your troubles to God for his intervention. [<http://www.sermons2liveby.com> (27.08.2014)]. **Message:** The same as the definition. **Cultureme:** 'surrendering oneself to God in critical times (+)'.

12. (A1) (p. 74) *The **family** that prays together stays together*. **Definition / Explanation:** The same as the proverb. **Message:** 'Families should worship God together.' **Cultureme:** 'uniting the family in prayers (+)'.

13. (A1) (p. 84) *When you pray, move your **feet***. Quakers' advice turned into an African-American proverb asserting the importance of virtuous action to complement prayerfulness. **Definition / Explanation:** Pray to God for His intervention, but also be active yourself. **Message:** The same as the definition. **Cultureme:** 'complementing prayers with work (+)'.

14. (A1) (p. 100) *What **goes** around comes around*. Cf. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." (Galatians 6: 7-9, KJB). **Definition / Explanation:** The results of things that one has done will someday have an effect on the person who started the events. [<http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com> (27.08.2014)]. **Message:** 'Think of the consequences

of your thoughts and deeds, for they will inevitably come back to you.' **Cultureme:** 'retribution (+)'.

15. (A1) (p. 102) **God ain't (isn't) choosy**. Whiting [...] lists the saying as a North Carolina proverb [...]: "God isn't choosy. And if God chooses his human agents so indiscriminately then who are we to refuse as fellow partners those who do or don't ordain women, do or don't separate the orders of bishops and presbyters. [...]" **Definition / Explanation:** God is not as selective and hard to please as we think, he loves us in spite of our imperfections. **Message:** 'One should know that God loves all humans, whatever their shortcomings.' **Cultureme:** 'God's indiscriminate love for erring people (+)'.

16. (A1) (p. 102) **God can make a way out of no way**. Cf. "Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43: 19, KJB). [...] 'God can make a way out of no way. Pray to him and he will open a way. ... [T]he proverb ... has occurred in African American speech; it may have originated (in the rhetoric of preachers) as a paraphrase of Isaiah 43:10, 'I will even make a way in the wilderness. ...' [...]. **Definition / Explanation:** God is an all-powerful God and He will not abandon you even when all seems lost. [<http://getbettertoday.com> (27.08.2014)]. **Message:** 'Put your trust in God's miraculous powers.' **Cultureme:** 'God's omnipotence (+)'.

17. (A1) (p. 102) **God doesn't love ugly**. Cf. "These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness *that* speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." (Proverbs 6: 16-19, KJB/AV). Anderson and Cundall (1910) lists the saying as a Jamaican proverb. ... (gloss: "God almighty does not love bad deeds"). **Definition / Explanation:** God does not like evil people and bad deeds. **Message:** 'Know that God does not like wicked people and evil deeds.' **Cultureme:** 'the resentment God feels towards wicked people and evil deeds (-)'.

18. (A1) (p. 103) **God doesn't make junk (trash)**. Cf. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2: 10, KJB). [...] "A priest once counseled a woman when she felt very low, 'Remember this: God made you, and God doesn't make junk.'" **Definition / Explanation:** All humans are precious to their Creator. **Message:** 'Do not feel low and rejected, but know that God loves you as you are.' **Cultureme:** 'the intrinsic value of each person in God's eyes (+)'.

19. (A1) (p. 103) **God doesn't play dice**. [...Einstein ...: ... *He* is not playing at dice.]. Christy (1888) 1: 5 gave as a proverb "Nothing with God is accidental," attributing it (spuriously) to Longfellow. **Definition / Explanation:** The universe is not random, it is predictable. [<https://answers.yahoo.com> (27.08.2014)]. **Message:** 'We can rest assured that the universe, nature and life are not random, but ordered, logical, predictable, and meaningful.' **Cultureme:** 'the fundamental coherence and predictability of life, nature and the universe (+)'.

20. (A1) (p. 104) **God protects the working girl**; (p. 119) **Heaven (God) protects (will protect) the working girl**. **Definition / Explanation:** The same as the proverb. **Message:** 'Girls who have to work are more often at risk than those who don't go to work, but they should trust God who is always there for them to protect them from bad people and temptations.' **Cultureme:** 'God's protection of the working girls (+)'.

21. (A1) (p. 104) **God** wants spiritual food, not religious nuts. **Definition / Explanation:** God prefers informed, intelligent and responsible believers to silly, unintelligent, superficial and unbalanced persons. **Message:** 'Cultivate a sound and responsible attitude to religion.' **Cultureme:** 'the responsible and informed faith (+)'.

22. (A1) (p. 105) *Let go; Let God.* **Definition / Explanation:** We let go of our attempts to do what we cannot do by ourselves and we let God do what needs to be done. We receive the healing, growth and serenity that God longs to give us. [<http://www.nacr.org/wordpress/118/letting-go-and-letting-god> (27.08.2014)]. **Message:** 'Give up controlling your problem and let God intervene.' **Cultureme:** 'letting God take control of a situation (+)'.

23. (A1) (p. 105) *Only God can make a tree.* Cf. Joyce Kilmer (1886–1918), *Trees*
I think that I shall never see // A poem lovely as a tree.
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest // Against the sweet earth's flowing breast;
A tree that looks on God all day, // And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in summer wear // A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain; // Who intimately lives with rain;
Poems are made by fools like me, // But only God can make a tree.

[<http://www.bartleby.com> (28.08.2014)]. The presupposition is that humans can't create living things. **Definition / Explanation:** God alone has unique powers of creating living things. **Message:** 'We should be aware of God's unique power to create living things.' **Cultureme:** 'God's unique power to create living things (+)'.

24. (A1) (p. 105) *Where God goes (is), the devil goes (is).* Cf. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour;" (1 Peter 5: 8, KJB). **Definition / Explanation:** The saintlier the deed, the more it attracts evil powers who want to denigrate and destroy it. **Message:** 'Whenever you undertake doing something good, noble and of high quality, be sure you are going to face a lot of opposition.' **Cultureme:** 'the opposition usually provoked by a noble act or work of high quality (-)'.

25. (A1) (p. 196) *To love another person is to see the face of God.* Cf. "And the second [commandment] is like, namely this, You shall love your neighbour as yourself." (Mark 12: 31, KJB). **Definition / Explanation:** 'When you love someone, you get closer to God. **Message:** The same as the definition. **Cultureme:** 'the love of another human being (+)'.

26. (A1; B) *Patience moves mountains.* Cf. "And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." (Matthew 17: 20, KJB). **Definition / Explanation:** If you exercise patience and endurance, you will make the impossible happen (you will work miracles). **Message:** 'Cultivate patience when pursuing your positive goals.' **Cultureme:** 'patience and perseverance (+)'.

27. (A1) (p. 214) *Everything (that happens) happens for a reason.* **Definition / Explanation:** [...]: "And believing in a scheme, which is to say believing in God—or Primal Force, or Elementary Intelligence, or whatever you choose to call the idea that everything that happens to us happens for a reason, and because Someone or Something arranges that it shall happen—believing in God, one can't believe in luck." [...]: "Of course, in history as in science everything happens for a reason." [DMP] **Message:** 'Whatever happens to

you, know that there is a reason behind this event, behind all your life, human destiny and the whole of creation.' **Cultureme:** 'the reason behind all that happens in life (+)'.

28. (A1; B) (p. 230) *There are three **sides** to every question (argument) (Every argument has three sides): my side, your side (his side, her side), and the right side (truth, God's side).* **Definition / Explanation:** There is an objective (absolute) truth in every argument. **Message:** 'Be unbiased and look for the objective truth in an argument.' **Cultureme:** 'being unbiased and objective in an argument (+)'.

29. (A1; B) (p. 278) *A good **woman** is hard to find.* An anti-proverb based on *A good man is hard to find.* [DMP]. Cf. "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies" (Proverbs 31: 10, KJB) **Definition / Explanation:** It is next to impossible to find a good woman nowadays. **Message:** 'Do not expect to find a good woman easily.' **Cultureme:** 'the scarcity and intrinsic value of the good woman (-)'.

2. Quasi-religious Proverbs (37)

30. (B) (p. 42) *A clear **conscience** is (usually) a sign of (usually comes from) a bad memory.* **Definition / Explanation:** It is impossible to have a clear conscience. Therefore if you think you have a clear conscience, you are suffering from bad memory because you cannot remember the not so nice things you did. [<https://answers.yahoo.com> (26.08.2014)]. **Message:** 'One should scrutinise carefully and critically his inner life, remembering that his seemingly clear conscience may be due to an innate human weakness: the refusal to admit to the fundamentally negative motives underlying one's deeds.' **Cultureme:** 'the fundamentally bad nature of one's motives (-)'.

31. (B) (p. 39) ***Church** is not out till the fat lady sings.* Also: *The **opera** isn't over till the fat lady sings; The **game** is not over till the fat lady sings;* (p. 40). ***Church** is not over till they sing.* **Definition / Explanation:** Nothing is irreversible until the final act is played out. [<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/it-aint-over-until-the-fat-lady-sings.html> (28.08.2014)]. **Message:** 'Do not expect a predetermined outcome until the very last stage of the process is over.' **Cultureme:** 'the unpredictability of the outcome of an event (+ / -)' – the sign depends on how the proverb is used, i.e., if someone is in a hopeless situation, this proverb can be used as an encouragement pointing to an unexpected positive turn of events; the proverb can also be used as a warning addressed to someone who has gone too far in doing something bad, implying that this may not last forever and that in the end things may take an unfavourable turn for him.

32. (B) (p. 52.) *No good **deed** goes unpunished.* **Definition / Explanation:** Often our acts of kindness meet with harsh ingratitude. The idea of this highly skeptical and pessimistic proverb is a rebuttal of the message of the older religious proverb "You reap what you sow". The hyperbole expresses very deep disillusionment with human ingratitude. **Message:** 'You shouldn't in the least expect your acts of kindness to be appreciated, even less reciprocated.' **Cultureme:** 'the utter ingratitude of some people (-)'.

33. (B) (p. 53) *The **devil** is in the details.* **Definition / Explanation:** Small things in plans and schemes that are often overlooked can cause serious problems later on. [<http://www.usingenglish.com> (26.08.2014)]. **Message:** 'One should be careful not to overlook the seemingly insignificant details in his work.' **Cultureme:** 'the dangers resulting from overlooking the details (-)'.

34. (B) (p. 54) *Do not greet the **devil** till (before) you meet him.* **Definition / Explanation:** Do not focus on the negative aspects of a future event. **Message:** The same as the definition. **Cultureme:** 'focusing on future imaginary dangers (-)'.

35. (B) (p. 54) *Go to the **devil** for truth and to a lawyer for a lie.* **Definition / Explanation:** Expect lawyers to be greater liars than the devil who is the master liar. **Message:** The same as the definition. **Cultureme:** 'the alleged propensity of many (Anglo-American) lawyers for lying (-)'.

36. (B) (p. 57) ***Do** unto others before they (can) do unto you (before they do you).* Cf. the biblical "Golden Rule": "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." (Matthew 7: 12, KJB). This cynical anti-proverb is based on the biblical quote above. It completely rebuts the idea expressed in the biblical mandate. **Definition / Explanation:** Harm before you can be harmed, be the first to strike. [<http://forum.wordreference.com> (26.08.2014)]. **Message:** The same as the definition. **Cultureme:** 'being the first to strike (+ / -)'. If the proverb is used as a piece of advice given to someone who is dealing with a very dangerous enemy, the sign is positive; if it is a sarcastic comment on the ruthless behaviour of unscrupulous people, then the sign is negative.

37. (B) (p. 68) ***Forgive** (love) your enemies, but remember (never forget) their names.* Cf. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;" (Matthew 5: 44, KJB). This quote was first used by John F. Kennedy. Now it is an anti-proverb based on the well-known biblical mandate. In essence, the proverb is a rebuttal of the commandment, as the focus is on not trusting one's enemies. **Definition / Explanation:** Do not bear your enemies malice, but watch out they do not harm you again. [<https://uk.answers.yahoo.com> (27.08.2014)]. **Message:** The same as the definition. **Cultureme:** 'not bearing one's enemies malice, but never trusting them again (+)'.

30. (B) (p. 73) *Respect **faith** (knowledge), but doubt is what gives you an education.* The proverb originates from a popular quote attributed to Wilson Mizner (1876-1933), a writer and crime erudite widely known as America's "most fascinating outlaw" and "an idol of low society and a pet of high." Mizner has authored a number of other widely known cynical / blunt witticisms, among which "Stealing from one is plagiarism, stealing from many is research", "Treat a whore like a lady and a lady like a whore," and "[being a Hollywood writer is like taking] a trip through a sewer in a glassbottomed boat." [Wikipedia (27.08.2014)]. **Definition / Explanation:** Faith, religion and good morals should be outwardly respected, but skeptical doubt should be preferred as the foundation of good education, since the latter is crucial for personal promotion. **Message:** 'If you want to succeed in the world, develop critical reasoning and a pragmatic outlook on life rather than "blind faith" in God.' **Cultureme:** 'demonstrating outward respect for religion, but maintaining a skeptical worldview (+ / -)'. The sign of the cultureme is positive when the proverb is used as a well-meaning advice given to naïve and gullible persons, and negative – when it is used sarcastically.

31. (B) (p. 95) *You can't put the **genie** back in the bottle [about Bolshevism, Nazism, the atomic bomb, etc.]; (cf. You can't put the bullet back in the gun).* **Definition / Explanation:** Be careful what you wish for or think you want, because once it happens and you get it and you're not happy with it, you can't 'un-ring the bell' [<https://answers.yahoo.com> (27.08.2014)]. **Message:** The same as the definition. **Cultureme:** 'cultivating prudence and forethought (+)'.

32. (B) (p. 102) *Even **God** gets tired of too much hallelujah.* (Cf. "Enough's enough, Koula, Hrisoula said sharply. 'Even God gets tired of too much Kyrie eleison.'" [...]) **Definition / Explanation:** Don't praise good people too highly, be moderate. **Message:** 'Abstain from praising someone's good looks, talents, good deeds, or achievements too highly.' **Cultureme:** 'moderation in praising (+)'.

33. (B) (p. 103) ***God** doesn't make land anymore.* Origin – Mark Twain: "Buy land, they're not making it anymore." **Definition / Explanation:** One shouldn't hesitate to invest in land, since land is becoming less and less available and therefore more and more valuable. **Message:** 'Buy land.' **Cultureme:** 'buying land (+)'.

34. (B) (p. 103) ***God** is good, but don't dance in a small boat.* (...often identified as Irish). **Definition / Explanation:** God can prevent things from happening, but don't do foolish things because there are consequences [<https://uk.answers.yahoo.com> (27.08.2014)]. The focus is on the second part of the sentence. **Message:** 'Whatever you do, trust in God, but do not take chances.' **Cultureme:** 'risking one's life foolishly (-)'.

35. (B) (p. 103) ***God** is in the details.* The saying may have entered English-speaking oral tradition from German or French and has to do with architecture and building. **Definition / Explanation:** Although it is relatively easy to come up with a grand overall vision or plan for something, it is much more difficult to make the plan work in practice when all its little detailed problems start to show up. An inspired creation, which continues to inspire no matter how closely one inspects it, needs as much attention to its details as to its overall plan. [<https://uk.answers.yahoo.com> (27.08.2014)]. **Message:** 'When working on a project, pay very special attention to even the minutest details.' **Cultureme:** 'paying attention to all minute details (+)'.

36. (B) (p. 104) ***God** made dirt, dirt don't hurt.* Said when someone, esp. children, drop food on the floor or ground and brush it off and eat it. **Definition / Explanation:** One doesn't have to be too fastidious as regards food that has been dropped on the floor or ground. **Message:** The same as the definition. **Cultureme:** 'eating food that has been dropped on the floor or ground (+)'.

37. (B) (p. 104) *Kill them all, and let **God** sort them out.* The proverb is a modern version of a Latin declaration attributed to the leader of the Albigensian Crusade of the early thirteenth century, "Kill them all; God will know his own!" [...]. **Definition / Explanation:** Through applying a sardonic hyperbole the proverb cautions against dictators, tyrants and other mass murderers who kill indiscriminately in the name of a presumably noble cause. **Message:** 'Be able to recognize ruthless, cruel and cynical persons and have no illusions about them.' **Cultureme:** 'persons who kill indiscriminately (-)'.

38. (B) (p. 105) *"Take what you want," says **God**, "and (but) pay for it."* **Definition / Explanation:** While we are free to choose whatever we want, the consequences of those choices aren't free. [<http://sequalah.org/daily-special/take-what-you-want-and-pay-for-it-says-god/> (28.08.2014)]. The focus is on the second part of the sentence. **Message:** The same as the definition. **Cultureme:** 'taking responsibility for one's personal choices (+)'.

39. (B) (p. 105) *Trust (in) **God**, but lock your door (your car).* Cf. "Trust but verify" and "Trust everyone, but cut the cards". **Definition/Explanation:** You should have enough faith / trust in God but you shouldn't be so naive as to believe that just because you trust in Him nothing wrong will EVER happen to you; It means that you must trust God but still exercise ... some sort of "just-in-case" acts. [<https://answers.yahoo.com> (28.08.2014)]. The focus is not on trusting God, but on cultivating prudence and suspicion. The

presupposition is that others may harm one. **Message:** 'Whatever you do, know that trust in God is not enough, therefore be suspicious, prudent and cautious, guarantee your safety the best you can and avoid taking chances.' **Cultureme:** 'prudence and caution (+)'.

40. (B) (p. 107) *Do good (You can do good) by doing well.* **Definition / Explanation:** [...] the proverb usually means that one who becomes wealthy stands in a better position to behave altruistically – though it can also suggest that the general well-being of society is somehow mystically enhanced by individual wealth. [DMP] **Message:** 'One should aspire to acquire wealth in order to be able to contribute on a larger scale to the common weal.' **Cultureme:** 'acquiring individual wealth and making use of it for the common weal (+)'.

41. (B) (p. 108) Sometimes the **good** you do does you no good. **Definition / Explanation:** Sometimes the good a person does is of no use to him. **Message:** 'Remember that sometimes the good you do may not benefit you at all.' **Cultureme:** 'the uselessness of doing good for the doer (-)'.

42. (B) (p. 107) *Do well (You can do well) by doing good.* About corporate good citizenship and the businesses that can help in preserving U.S. cities. The proverb asserts that prosperity should result from a corporate's mission to truly benefit large numbers of people instead of focusing on just making profits at all cost. There are plenty of cases proving that the mission-oriented approach can be far more beneficial for a company than a solely profit-oriented strategy. [<http://www.forbes.com/doing-well-by-doing-good> (28.08.2014)]. **Definition / Explanation:** Prosperity should result from a corporate's mission to truly benefit large numbers of people instead of focusing solely on making profits. **Message:** The same as the definition. **Cultureme:** 'getting rich through activities that benefit large numbers of people (+)'.

43. (B) (p. 115) *Busy hands are happy hands* (cf. 'Man's idle mind is the devil's workshop' [DMP]). **Definition / Explanation:** One should always be engaged in doing sensible, worthwhile work, which will keep him away from temptation, i.e. boredom, depression and unhappiness. The presupposition is that idle persons tend to be unhappy, i.e., they have fallen victims to the devil through sloth. **Message:** The same as the definition. **Cultureme:** 'joyful and fulfilling work (+)'.

44. (B) (p. 119) *Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die.* **Definition / Explanation:** Although heaven is described as a wonderful, beautiful place, human beings are resistant to dying in order to experience heaven firsthand; Everyone wants to enjoy success, but few are willing to work hard or take the risks involved in achieving it. [www.englishdaily626.com/proverbs (28.08.2014)]. The proverb criticises indolence and self-complacency. The presupposition is that happiness and success have a very high cost. **Message:** 'If you want to be successful and / or happy, be prepared to work very hard and take risks.' **Cultureme:** 'the general unwillingness to committing oneself to hard work and risk-taking as the only road to success and happiness (-)'.

45. (B) (p. 120) *In heaven an angel is nobody in particular (nobody special).* Originating from G. B. Shaw's *Man and Superman* (the appended "Maxims for Revolutionists"). **Definition / Explanation:** One cannot stand out among many others who are equally good. **Message:** 'Do not try to stand out among others who are equally good.' **Culturemes:** 'trying to stand out among others who are equally good (-)'.

46. (B) (p. 120) *It's hell being (to be) poor.* **Definition / Explanation:** It's terrible to be poor; living in poverty is degrading, humiliating and very much like dwelling in hell. **Message:** 'Beware of poverty, try to prevent it at all cost.' **Cultureme:** 'poverty (-)'.

47. (B) (p. 123) **Honesty** is such a lonely word. The presupposition is that honesty is a primary value. Being honest to God, to yourself and to others is an important requirement in the life of the religious person. **Definition / Explanation:** Honest people are generally the least admired of all in the modern world. They are often avoided, misunderstood and ignored because they are usually not very successful. The only way an honest person can survive in today's world is to isolate himself from others. **Message:** 'If you want to retain your inner integrity, prepare to be misunderstood, undervalued, avoided, and very lonely.' **Cultureme:** 'the loneliness of the honest person (-)'.

48. (B) (p. 132) **Karma** is a bitch. Cf. 'Payback is a bitch' and 'Life is a bitch'. The proverb belongs to the jargon of rapper / rock musicians. **Definition / Explanation:** The saying is synonymous with *It serves you (him, her, them, me) right*, when used as a critical comment or remark addressed to someone who has been mean to someone in trouble, but now finds himself in a similar critical situation. **Message:** 'You shouldn't treat others unfairly, because you in turn are bound to be treated in the same way.' **Culturemes:** 1. 'treating others unfairly (-)'; 2. 'retribution (+)'.

49. (B) (p. 139) *Anything good in life is either illegal, immoral, or fattening;* (p. 251) *Anything good is either illegal, immoral, or fattening; All the things I like are either immoral, illegal, or fattening.* **Definition / Explanation:** All pleasant things in life are either unhealthy, or condemned by society. There is a presupposition that all the things in life people really enjoy consist in gratifying their whims and unrestrained bodily desires. The saying has two applications. It can be used either as a joke, or as a complaint. When used as a joke, the person who utters the proverb pretends that he, like everybody else, leads a life of pleasure, gratifying all his bodily desires and unrestrained ambitions, and that like everybody else he is unhappy with the constraints put by nature and society, finding them too harsh on him; in reality, however, this person may be perfectly content. If the proverb is used literally, it is a sincere complaint uttered by an individual who believes in his given right to live a life full of unrestrained pleasure, and is genuinely impatient with the norms and restrictions of society. **Messages:** 1. 'Quietly enjoy your modest, pure and unassuming life while pretending you are a hedonistic person like everybody else.' 2. 'Live a life of unrestrained pleasure.' **Culturemes:** 1. 'living a pure and simple life while pretending one is no different than others (+)'; 2. 'living a life of unrestrained pleasure (+)'.

50. (B) (p. 150) *Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition.* ([...] attributed to an "unnamed Navy chaplain at Pearl Harbor"): "Cromwell said, 'Put your trust in God, but mind to keep your power dry,' and an unnamed Navy chaplain at Pearl Harbor on December 7 said in the midst of hell, 'Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition, I got one of the sons-of-b— (...)'." (DMP). **Definition / Explanation:** After taking a moment to praise the Lord, there remains work to be done, namely, fighting off the ongoing attack. [<https://answers.yahoo.com> (28.08.2014)]. The focus is on the second part of the sentence. **Message:** 'Trust the Lord, but take control of the situation yourself.' **Cultureme:** 'taking control of a critical situation (+)'.

51. (B) (p. 160) *A man without faith (religion, God) is like a fish without a bicycle.* **Definition / Explanation:** People do not need religion at all, it is completely useless. The proverb is meant to be a joke about human backwardness. The presupposition is that in the age of science, technology and consumerism religion and God are seen as a setback. **Message:** 'We don't need God or religion at all, let's discard them.' **Cultureme:** 'man's freedom from, and independence of, God (+ / -)'. If the proverb designates a truthful proposition, the cultureme is positive, if it denotes a false, sarcastic proposition, the sign is negative.

52. (B) (p. 177) *Love thy neighbor, but don't get caught*. Cf. "And the second [commandment] is like, namely this, You shall love your neighbour as yourself." (Mark 12: 31, KJB). **Definition / Explanation:** The same as the proverb. This proverb is either a cynical anti-proverb based on the biblical mandate quoted above, or a jocular witticism. **Messages:** 1. 'Enjoy an illicit love affair with your neighbour, but make sure nobody knows.' 2. 'Pretend jokingly that you approve of the cleverness of some persons who are enjoying an illicit and secret relationship with someone, e.g., a neighbour, a co-worker, etc.' **Cultureme:** 'having an illicit love affair with someone, e.g., one's neighbour, and keeping it a secret (+ / -)'. The sign depends on whether the proverb is applied as a serious piece of advice, or as a joke

53. (B) (p. 188) *Pain is temporary, victory (glory, pride) is forever*. – This proverb has a faint allusion to Christian martyrs. **Definition / Explanation:** Ignore the present pain and inconvenience and keep in mind that your efforts will be richly rewarded. **Message:** 'Endure pain in the name of the future reward.' **Cultureme:** 'stoicism and endurance in the name of the future reward (+)'.

54. (B) (p. 196) *There'll be pie in the sky when you die*. The saying probably entered oral tradition as a proverb from a song by the laborite singer [indeed, this is the adjective] Joe Hill (sometimes titled "The Preacher and the Slave") – unless Hill was himself using a proverb: "Work and pray, live on hay, / You'll get pie in the sky when you die." [...] The song parodies the old Protestant hymn "The Sweet By and By"; Hill's song – like the proverb itself – satirizes the concept of patiently enduring earthly misery and injustice in hopes of a heavenly reward. [DMP, p. 197]. **Definition / Explanation:** There will be no award in afterlife for gullible people who put up with all kinds of misery and injustice. The presupposition is that there is no afterlife and no heaven. **Message:** 'Start improving your present circumstances now instead of naively hoping for an imaginary heavenly reward.' **Cultureme:** 'the lie about a heavenly reward expecting those who put up with earthly misery and injustice (-)'.

55. (B) (p. 206) *The longest prayer has an "Amen"*. The inference [is] that all things, both good and evil, come to an end. [...] The proverb, principally from Anglo-Caribbean countries and nearby places, is often [...] coupled with the older—and more widely distributed—proverb, "The longest road has an end." [DMP]. **Definition / Explanation:** All things, both good and evil, come to an end. **Message:** 'If you are in a bad situation, rest assured that sooner or later your troubles will be over; if you are enjoying happiness, enjoy the moment to the full as it will not last forever.' **Cultureme:** 'the transience of all things in life (+ / -)'; the sign depends on whether the proverb is used as an encouragement to a person who feels frustrated, or as a reminder that good times never last long.

56. (B) (p. 222) *Sacred cows make great* (p. 46, *good, the best, gourmet*) *hamburgers* (p. 46, *burgers*). The meaning according to the internet source below is: "a change of outmoded ideas and practices, in which regular members of a group are involved in decision-making, may actually bring large benefits to all" [<http://static.userland.com/gems/surfsideUnitingChurch/sacredcows.pdf> (15.09.2012)]. **Definition / Explanation:** Sacred cows – outdated and costly business practices such as the reports that are never read or a slow-down of innovative ideas – exist in every company ... the authors of SACRED COWS MAKE THE BEST BURGERS show how corporations can kill off the sacred cows that are crippling them. [<http://www.amazon.com/Sacred-Cows-Make-Best-Burgers/dp/0446672602> (28.08.2014)]. **Message:** 'A corporation in crisis should change its cumbersome and inefficient ideas and practices and start introducing practical ideas involving its regular members in decision-

making, which will bring benefits to all.' **Cultureme:** 'getting rid of outmoded inefficient practices and introducing positive changes in the organisation (+)'.

57. (B) (p. 231) *Sins can be forgiven, but stupid is forever*; (p. 231) *Sinners can repent, but stupid is forever*. **Definition / Explanation:** The proverb laments the utter incapacity in a stupid person to change, grow, reform and improve, comparing such a person with a sinner, who can repent and be forgiven. **Message:** 'Do not expect from a stupid person to reform and improve.' **Cultureme:** 'stupid persons (-)'.

66. (B) (p. 285) *There is no zealot like a convert (The latest convert is the greatest zealot)*. **Definition / Explanation:** A saying ... for indicating the overuse of something you just newly learned. Say you were happy with a hammer and a nail and then somebody taught you the virtues of a screw and screwdriver. From then on, every problem incorrectly looks like it can be solved only with the screwdriver. [<http://english.stackexchange.com> (28.08.2014)]. **Message:** Beware of an enthusiastic, but narrow-minded and fanatical person who has just learned something new or has just acquired a new skill. Such a person is very likely to want to make universal use of his newly acquired skill for solving all kinds of problems that require their own, specific solutions. **Cultureme:** 'enthusiastic, narrow-minded persons (-)'.

CONCLUSION

In the first group of twenty-nine religious texts (types A1 and A2), twenty-seven (type A1) are religious in both form and content, while two (type A2) – the proverbs numbered 3 and 6 – are religious in content although no religious words have been employed. In this group, the larger part of the texts – twenty-one – have positive culturemes versus only ten proverbs whose culturemes are negative. Eleven proverbs (numbers 6, 7, 14, 16, 17, 18, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 29) are modern renditions of Biblical texts, two (13 and 15) have come down to us from sermons, and one (19) is authored by the scientist Albert Einstein, who is known to have been a deeply religious person. The 13 themes, listed below, whose semantic density ranges from seven to one, all belong to the religious semantic domain:

- seven proverbs about God and his various characteristics (numbers 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23);
- five about the devil (numbers 2, 8, 9, 10, 24);
- four about man's relationship with God (numbers 1, 2, 11, 22);
- three about retribution (numbers 8, 10, 14)
- three about praying (numbers 11, 12, 13)
- one proverb about each of the following: atheists, opposing God / fate, cowardice, guilty conscience, patience, objectivity, scarcity of good women, and the reason behind the whole of creation.

many of the other basic religious words, such as 'angel', 'heaven', 'hell', 'salvation', 'good', 'bad', 'right', 'wrong', 'wicked', 'evil', 'virtue', 'sin', 'holy', 'pure', 'righteous(ness)', 'love', 'forgiveness', 'charity', 'faith', 'church', 'religion', 'preaching', 'sermon', etc., are entirely missing from the texts in the religious group. Indeed, many of these words are to be found in the next, quasi-religious group of thirty-seven proverb, as can be seen below. According to their key word, the quasi-religious ones are grouped as follows:

- ten (numbers 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 58, 59) with the word 'God (Lord)';
- three proverbs (numbers 48, 49, 50) with the word 'good';
- two proverbs (38, 51) with the word 'faith' and 'heaven' (52, 53);
- one proverb each with one of the following words / phrases: 'clear conscience' (30), 'forgiveness' (37), 'angel' (53), 'hell' (54), 'honesty' (55), 'religion' (59), 'love for one's neighbour' (60), 'pain' (martyrdom)(61)', 'prayer' (63), 'sins' (65), 'zealot' (66), and 'convert' (66).

Of the last group above, there are three texts employing words pertaining to mid-eastern and eastern religions (cults) instead of to the Christian religion; they are: 'genie' (39), 'karma' (56) and 'sacred cows' (64). These foreign concepts have entered the Anglo-American lexicon most probably as loan words and have now become regular lexemes.

The themes of the twenty-nine religious texts are centred almost exclusively on the practical, day-to-day aspects of religion. There are no proverbs about afterlife, God's majestic power and perfection, or the beauty of the divine world. The distribution of positive and negative culturemes indicates that the positive outlook on life prevails over negative feelings such as fear, uncertainty, or fatalism, which signify the old Puritan preoccupation with human sinfulness, the depravity of human nature, or the fear of hell and punishment, so typical of early American culture with its focus on Predestination. This attitude has been replaced by a more optimistic, realistic and pragmatic way of thinking. Five of the proverbs stand out with the beauty of their images and uplifting messages: *There is never a cross you can't bear, Only God can make a tree, Let go and let God, The family that prays together stays together, and To love another person is to see the face of God.* The general idea of the texts in this group is that of realism, prudence, reliance on one's own efforts, the belief in the spiritual help due to the deserving, and the faith in the power of the individual to control his own life and take responsibility for his actions.

The group of quasi-religious proverbs shows an equal number of positive and negative culturemes – twenty-two for each type; the culturemes of six of the texts can be both positive or negative, depending on the specific context in which the proverb is used. But the most peculiar aspect of this group is the stark negativism exuded by the subgroup of sixteen texts within this group, whose messages reveal in a blunt, realistic and witty manner a deep kind of pessimism that stems from an utter disbelief in the existence of a Creator and the noble nature of humans:

(30) A clear **conscience** is (usually) a sign of a bad memory.

(32) No good **deed** goes unpunished.

(35) Go to the **devil** for truth and to a lawyer for a lie.

(36) **Do** unto others before they do unto you (before they do you).

(37) **Forgive** (love) your enemies, but remember (never forget) their names.

(38) Respect **faith** (knowledge), but doubt is what gives you an education.

(45) Kill them all, and let **God** sort them out.

(55) **Honesty** is such a lonely word.

(57) *Anything good in **life** is either illegal, immoral, or fattening.*

(58) *Praise the **Lord** and pass the ammunition.*

(59) *A **man** without faith (religion, God) is like a fish without a bicycle.*

(60) *Love thy **neighbor**, but don't get caught.*

(62) *There'll be **pie** in the sky when you die.*

(65) ***Sins** can be forgiven, but stupid is forever.*

(66) *There is no **zealot** like a convert.*

These sober, cynical statements, whose tone borders on the grotesque, demonstrate the complete lack of illusions on the part of their authors about the persons to whom the proverbs are addressed and about the human condition as such.

The words denoting religious concepts, symbols, practices and objects in group B do not function with their religious semantics. Instead, they are used as dead (conceptual, linguistic) metaphors conveying strictly secular ideas. From a diachronic perspective, this fact mirrors the dynamics of the attitude to religion in American culture: from its dominant role in the life of the early American Puritan society, down to its modest and subservient role in the American materialistic consumer society of the last century or so.

The last subgroup of sixteen pessimistic texts additionally confirms the lasting effects of the deepening secularisation that has been taking place in modern America. And because of the globalising role of present-day American linguoculture, this process is very likely to continue to spread and affect other individuals, groups, even nations on our planet.

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